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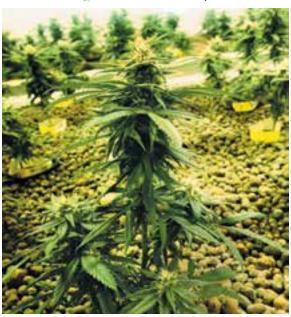
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ON THE COVER: Sea of Green Farms, by KELLY O

WHY I GAVE UP BOOZE IN FAVOR OF WEED  It Helps with My Anxiety, It Doesn't Give Me Hangovers, and Are You Aware of What It Does to Sex?  By Sarah Galvin
HOW TO BE HIGH IN PUBLIC How to Eat Out, Ride the Bus, Converse with Strangers, Take a Flight, and Interact with the Automated Checkout While Stoned By Emily Nokes
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The cure for my pot-phobia came in the form of a brilliant, beautiful girlfriend, who also instilled in me the ability to curse in Ukrainian and make a poached egg.

## Why I Gave Up Booze in Favor of Weed

It Helps with My Anxiety, It Doesn't Give Me Hangovers, and Are You Aware of What It Does to Sex?

BY SARAH GALVIN

or a tiny person, I can really drink. I've drunk large men under the table multiple times, no problem. It's not something I set out to do—I'm just not a one-or two-drink person. I like to get hammered. My grandpa did, too. I wouldn't have been able to recognize him without a glass of brown liquor on the rocks. He was a psychiatrist, and after downing a fifth of brandy *every night*, he got up at 6 a.m. to see patients. He lived to 86. Legend has it, he was immune to hangovers.

I, however, am not. I get them bad. I've hallucinated from hangovers—I remember walking past a purely imaginary man in a trash can one morning, so fried from drinking I thought nothing of it. I don't puke, I don't have headaches, I simply lose my mind. I'm overwhelmed with anxiety. I get hangovers like Krusty the Clown on *The Simpsons* when he sees a poster of himself on Bart's wall and thinks it's a mirror: "Hang on, kid, I've got a tack in my head."

Many members of my family, myself included, have generalized anxiety disorder, meaning basically we're scared shitless every minute of the day. People sometimes say things like "Why don't you try yoga?" These

well-meaning people do not know what they're talking about. I do every nonchemical thing possible for my anxiety—an hour of exercise a day, therapy every two weeks. It's not an emotional problem, though; it's the wiring in my brain. It fascinates me that many people don't seem to realize there is as much structural variation in human brains as human bodies. For me, and several others who share my genes, it's like some knob is cranked up too high. Everyday life is a flood, equal parts staggering beauty and horror. Makes you want a brandy or five, extra ice.

I'm happy to say I most often drink because it's fun, but I'm definitely an anxious person and booze has always helped me there. At one point, I went to a doctor because I thought I had some kind of abdominal cancer, which turned out to be stomach cramps from stress. I was prescribed Xanax, which is glorious, but which you're not supposed to mix with booze. And according to Harvard Medical School, benzodiazepine use may raise my risk of getting Alzheimer's.

I would never have expected weed to prove the third-best remedy for my anxiety (after sex and frequent exercise). The first time I smoked weed, I was 13, and the weed was laced with something awful—or perhaps we laced it ourselves by smoking it out of a pipe made from duct tape. While my friends watched, I walked 50 feet without moving



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my legs and turned into a floating tongue and eyeballs. My field of vision became carpeted with Chinese dragons and sinister versions of that flying glove from *Yellow Submarine*. I threw up on a merry-go-round in front of a busload of elementary-school children, apparently. I was tormented by unsettling questions about perception for weeks afterward, and for some reason couldn't listen to Nine Inch Nails anymore. I resolved never to touch marijuana again.

The cure for my pot-phobia came in the form of a brilliant, beautiful girlfriend, who also instilled in me the ability to curse in Ukrainian and make a poached egg. She turned me on to marijuana and the poetry of Marina Tsvetaeva. After three hits, I was scared—I thought the heater was blowing cold air on me (the window was open) and I thought her roommate had discovered a conspiracy involving the FDA and synthetic fish oil in vitamins. I awkwardly whispered that I was way too high, and I hid in her room under blankets.

I began to hallucinate, which I realize is not a very common response to marijuana, but don't forget I used to hallucinate from hangovers. Somehow, in this particular girlfriend's company, the hallucinations were

Somehow I'd heard a lot about weed's art- and food-enhancing properties, but what it does for sex was perhaps my favorite surprise ever.

hilarious. She appeared to have muttonchops (those extra-long, walrus-style sideburns) that continuously changed color and shape like the blobs in a lava lamp. She didn't know what muttonchops were—I'm not even sure if there's a Ukrainian word specifically for muttonchops—and when I tried to explain them, I laughed uncontrol-

lably. I tried to kiss her over and over, but as soon as I closed my eyes, I saw undulating blobs of multicolored hair and burst out laughing. *You* try saying "mutton-chops" when you're high without laughing.

My sideburns hallucinations that night prevented me from experiencing the biggest selling point of marijuana: stoned sex. Somehow I'd heard a lot about weed's art- and food-enhancing properties, but what it does for sex was perhaps my favorite surprise ever, on par even with the Jolly Roger cake my mom made for my 6th birthday when I was obsessed with pirates.

Weed slows down time, intensifies sensation—especially pleasant sensations—and makes me, at least, hyperaware of my feelings toward the people around me. You can imagine what it did for my feelings toward someone I adore enough to risk a junior-high duct-tapefumes flashback. Our bodies seemed completely permeable, suspended in time, and when I came, I thought it would never end. I was reminded of a Joe Wenderoth





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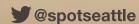
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poem describing the pleasure a log feels as it burns.

She smoked exclusively spliffs, this girlfriend, and I came to associate the sight of her mixing weed and tobacco on top of a book with the end of the workday and peaceful Sunday mornings. We often smoked carefully in the shower, ashing the spliff in a film canister. The hallucinations subsided.

I can't write any better when I'm stoned than I can when I'm drunk, so weed is reserved for the times alcohol used to occupy. I am a complete lightweight—one big hit and I'm done for the evening. I like to work until at least midnight, take one hit, have the world's most relaxing shower, and then read until bedtime. My sleep is uninterrupted, and there are, of course, no hangovers.

One side effect of my nightly ritual is that if there are any descriptions of food in whatever I'm reading, I have to stop and eat something. A couple of times, I have literally eaten all the food in my apartment. Once, after reading a description of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, I was unable to sleep. I had already showered and brushed my teeth, but I just couldn't take the visions of

peanut butter and jelly beckoning like Playboy centerfolds. I finally got up, made a peanut butter and jelly sandwich, ate it, made another peanut butter and jelly sandwich, ate it, made a third peanut butter and jelly sandwich, and ate that. I was in a trance. Their flavor seemed to inhabit my entire body.

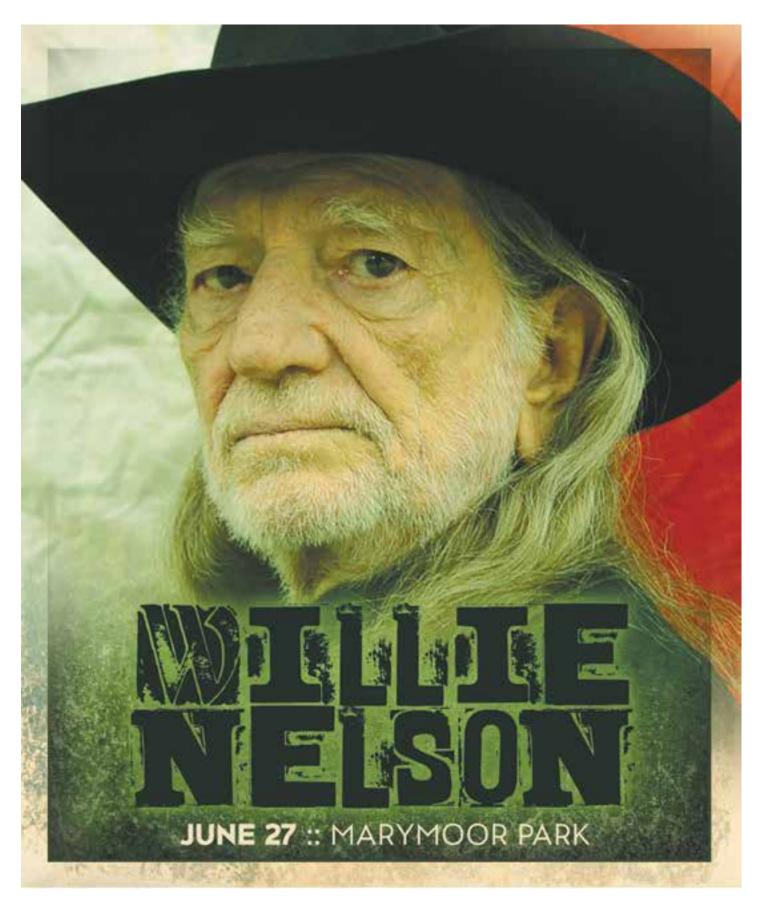
When I came, I thought it would never end. I was reminded of a Joe Wenderoth poem describing the pleasure a log feels as it burns.

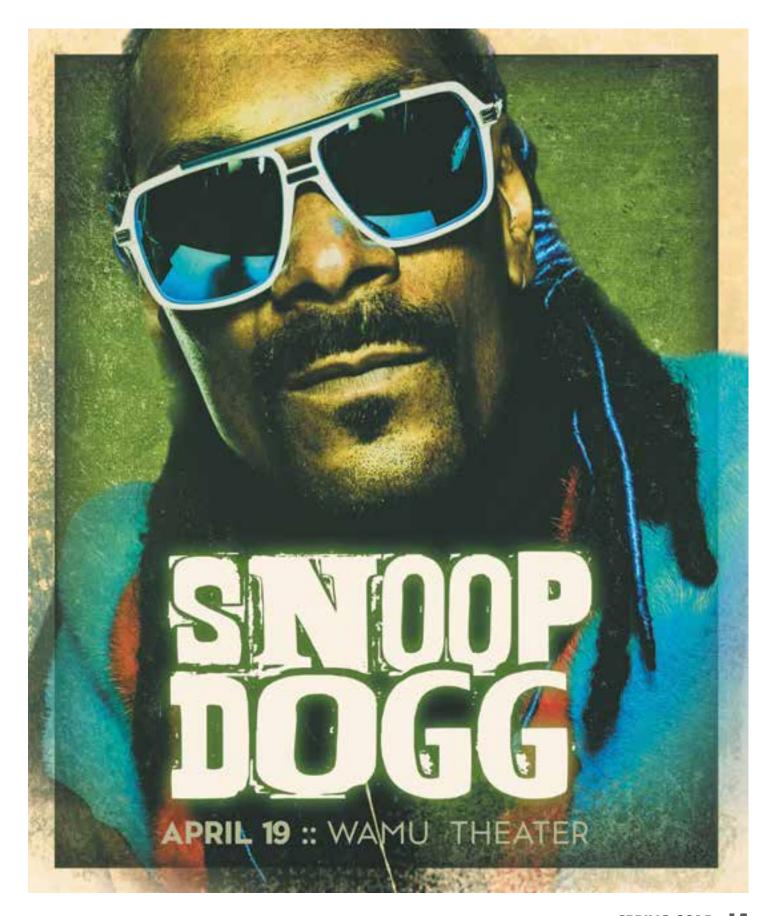
I put peanut butter on one finger and jelly on another and licked it off, in complete rapture. "Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches have possessed me" is one of the hundreds of ridiculously stupid thoughts I have restrained myself from posting on Facebook or texting to friends while high. One night, I was convinced my idea for an assortment of fruit-flavored body bags would make me rich. The reasoning behind this was something like "Why are body bags always so black, sad, and inedible?"

The last time I went in for a physical, I was proud to answer all the drinking-related questions on the questionnaire. I drink maybe once a week these days, in moderation, and usually top-shelf. I was alarmed to learn I weighed only 98 pounds (my normal weight is about 110). This was especially shocking considering my possession by sandwiches. I attributed the weight loss to a mixture of working too much and the absence of beer calories. I did not refill my Xanax prescription—I don't need it now, amazingly—but I happily accepted my doctor's prescription to eat more cheese.









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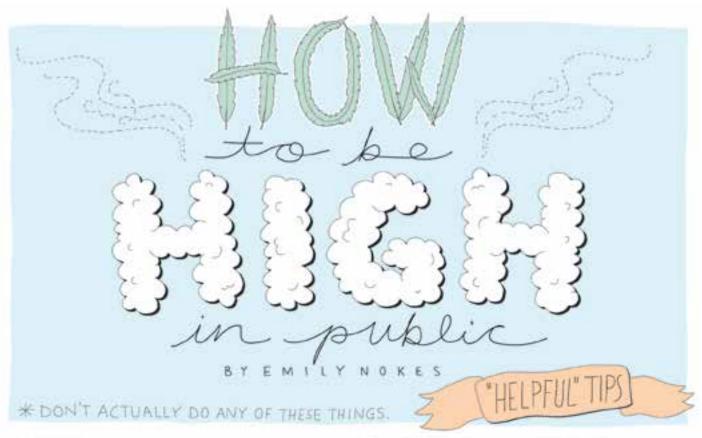
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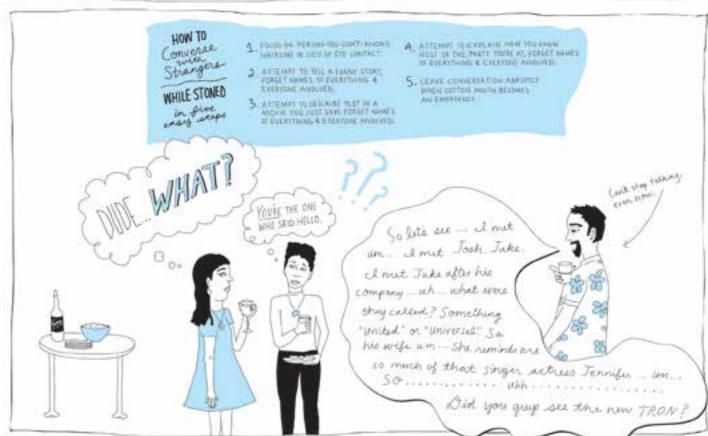
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# Is Marijuana Addictive?

#### A Look at the Scientific Research

BY KATHLEEN RICHARDS

ntil a few months ago, Jason never thought marijuana was addictive. Even though he had been smoking weed every day for the past 10 years, he didn't think it was a compulsive habit. But then the 43-year-old Seattle resident decided to quit for health-related reasons. "For the first couple days, I didn't feel much different," he recalled. "The third day, I was, oddly enough, very hungry. I became very, very hungry, like I couldn't get enough food in." And that wasn't all. "I started having very extreme dreams, very detailed, increasingly intense, bizarre stories." He said he felt as if, without marijuana, "an essential nutrient was missing."

He endured these symptoms for three weeks until he finally decided to start smoking again. "I was actually surprised, the level of dependence," said Jason, who asked that his last name be withheld to protect his privacy. "I was kind of shocked and surprised that [the withdrawal symptoms] were so pronounced—more like a psych med than stopping coffee and being curmudgeonly and tired."

Is marijuana addictive? The answer varies widely depending on whom you ask. If you ask the federal government or drug-war proponents, the answer is a resounding "yes." If you ask legalization advocates or medical marijuana patients, the answer will likely be "no" or maybe "not really." How can there be such a discrepancy? What does science say about the matter?

The most commonly cited statistic regarding cannabis's addictiveness is 9 percent—that is, about 9 percent of people who try pot will at some point in their lives become addicted to it. But that's a highly disputed number.

The 9 percent statistic comes from a twoyear study conducted from 1990 to 1992 of 8,098 participants ages 15 to 54 in the "noninstitutionalized civilian population" in the lower 48 states, the results of which were published in a 1994 report called "Comparative Epidemiology of Dependence on Tobacco, Alcohol, Controlled Substances, and Inhalants: Basic

Findings from the National Comorbidity Survey." According to Roger Roffman, a professor emeritus of the University of Washington who has done extensive research on cannabis dependency, the 1994 study represents "the best epidemiological research that we have today." Which is why people continue to fight over it.

Researchers in that study defined "dependence" based on criteria laid out in the revised third edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (commonly known as DSM)—i.e., the bible of mental-health pro-



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fessionals. This particular edition of the *DSM* was published in 1987 and included seven criteria for the diagnosis of dependence on cannabis. If at least three criteria are experienced in a one-month period, the patient is believed to have cannabis dependence:

- 1. The substance was taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than the person intended
- 2. Persistent desire or one or more unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use
- 3. A great deal of time getting the substance, taking the substance, or recovering from it
- 4. Frequent intoxication or withdrawal symptoms when expected to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home
- 5. Important social, occupational, or recreational activities given up or reduced because of substance use
- 6. Continued substance use despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent social, psychological, or physical problem that is caused or exacerbated by the use of the substance
- 7. Need for markedly increased amounts of the substance in order to achieve intoxication or desired effect.

Many people have criticized these criteria. For one thing, they appeared in a diagnostic manual for mental disorders. To some, this is an inherent bias in how marijuana use is viewed—as a mental disorder. And keep in mind this list was made when marijuana was illegal in all 50 states. As Dr. Sunil Kumar Aggarwal, a graduate of UW School of Medicine, has pointed out, both 3 and 5 on that list might not be an issue in a place where marijuana is legal.

Also, the criteria don't take into account pot's medicinal uses, which could explain symptoms such as taking large amounts. In other words, it's possible researchers might have unfairly or inaccurately labeled someone who's not addicted to pot as a pot addict.

And the study was partially

funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, an organization that some argue has a financial stake in continuing the war on drugs.

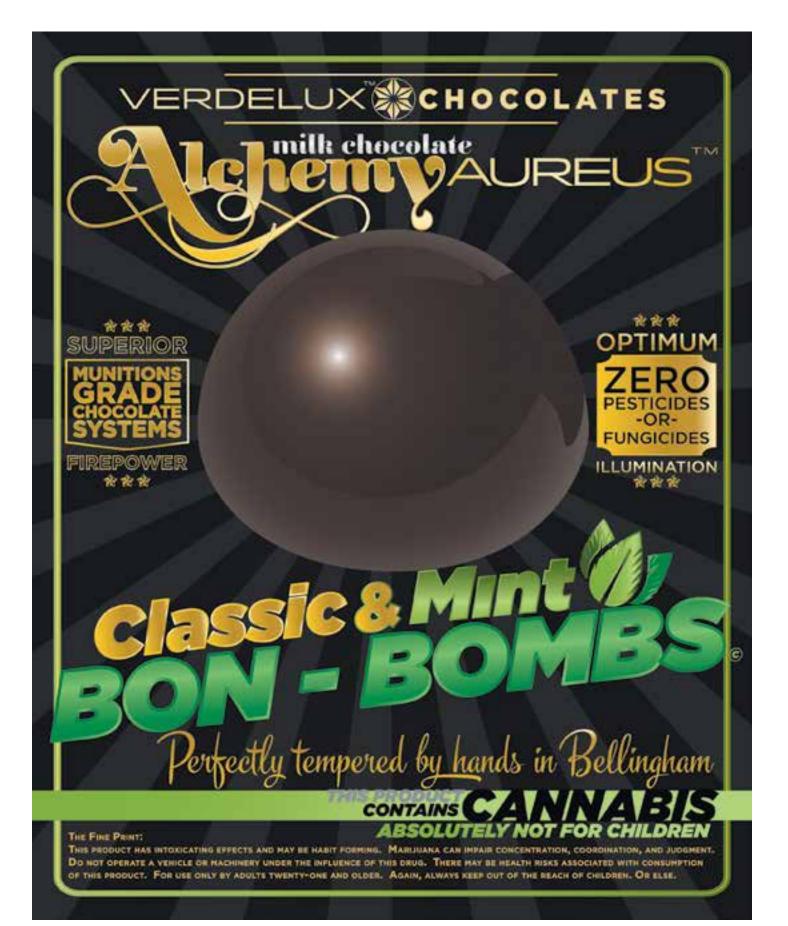
Plus, the criteria used to determine addiction are now somewhat out of date. The *DSM* is now in its fifth edition and has shifted its terminology from "dependence" to "cannabis use disorder." It's defined as "a problematic pattern of cannabis use leading to clinically significant impairment or distress, as manifested by at least two of [11 criteria], occurring within a 12-month period."

Those 11 criteria include:

- 1. Using more or for a longer period than intended
  - 2. Persistent desire to cut back
  - 3. Lots of time spent using
  - 4. Craving, strong urges to use
- 5. Use contributes to failures at work, school, home
- 6. Continued use despite recurrent interpersonal or social problems related to use
- 7. Use leads to giving up or reducing important social, occupational, or recreational activities
- 8. Recurrent use in hazardous situations
- 9. Continued use despite recurrent physical or psychological problems related to use
  - 10. Tolerance
  - 11. Withdrawal.

According to Roffman, "cannabis use disorder" is an umbrella concept that covers both addictive dependent use and nonaddictive abusive use of marijuana. In other words, many of the same criteria that were once considered symptoms of dependence are now part of a concept that also includes abusive—but not necessarily addictive—use. Plus, the DSM V acknowledges a broad range of severity levels: mild (two or three symptoms), moderate (four or five symptoms), and severe (six or more symptoms). It's a much more nuanced view of addiction than previously defined.

The question is, if that same survey in the early '90s had been











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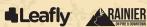
















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completed today, would the 9 percent rate hold? More recent research suggests: "not quite."

The 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, a study conducted by the federal government, found that an individual is more likely to become dependent on or to abuse cannabis the earlier he or she first tries it—11.5 percent of adults who started using at age 14 or vounger become dependent on it, versus only 2.6 percent of those who try it when they're at least 18. Clearly, 2.6 percent is less than 9 percent, and even considering the younger demographic, an average of those two statistics doesn't quite equal 9 percent. However, dependence and abuse also appear to be linked to how much a person smokes: Among daily users, the National Survey on Drug Use and Health found that up to 50 percent

#### 11.5 percent of adults who started using at age 14 or younger become dependent on it.

can be expected to develop a problem with weed.

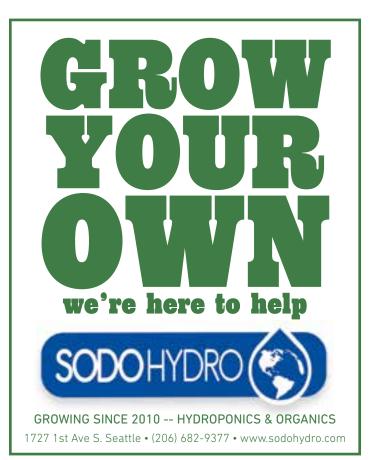
But once again, if you start to pick apart the data, you'll find there's more nuance to the story. The survey used criteria in the DSM IV to determine those who were dependent on or abusing pot. The criteria of dependence are the same as in the DSM III, but the survey makes an important distinction between "dependence" and "abuse"—dependence being a more severe problem because it involves "the psychological and physiological effects of tolerance and withdrawal," while abuse is determined by the presence of problems at work, home, and school, with family or friends, with physical danger, and/or trouble with the law. What they're calling "abuse" includes getting in trouble with the law, but getting in trouble with the law isn't evidence of "abusing" drugs necessarily. So the decision to lump together dependence and abuse rates might, therefore, be misleading.

In fact, a 2004 report, "Prevalence of Marijuana Use Disorders in the United States," looked at two large national surveys conducted 10 years apart and found that abuse was much more prevalent than dependence when looking at marijuana use disorder cases: Abuse represented approximately 75 to 80 percent of total marijuana use disorder cases. Using that percentage, one could estimate that about 2 percent, not 2.6 percent, of people who try pot when they're at least age 18 will become dependent on it, or about 8.6 percent of those who start at age 14 or younger. (The report used criteria from the *DSM* IV.)

(To confuse matters more, there is also a distinction made between physical dependence and addiction—addiction being the compulsive use of a drug despite harmful consequences, and physical dependence involving tolerance and withdrawal.)

Considering all this, let's say the 9 percent addictiveness claim is a bit shaky. There's still ample evidence that, for some people, marijuana can be addictive. It may not be as addictive as alcohol or have withdrawal symptoms as pronounced as heroin, but that doesn't mean it's not addictive at all. The evidence? Thousands of people seek treatment for marijuana addiction every year. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 845,000 people in the United States aged 12 or older reported receiving treatment for marijuana use in 2013.

Back when Roffman was first attempting to study marijuana dependence as a young researcher, anecdotal evidence showed him that addiction was a misunderstood and underreported problem. Although the common perception is that the federal government solely perpetuated mass hysteria around pot use ("reefer madness"), Roffman says there was actually a split in how marijuana was viewed by scientists and drug-war advocates. In fact, when he was









beginning to apply for grants to study marijuana dependence and treatment, he was turned down due to the lack of scientific data that such a problem existed.

The existing data at the time, he said, was from "treatment agencies across the country where people being treated for compulsive marijuana use were almost always concurrently being treated for compulsive alcohol use or compulsive use of speed or depressants." To prove the topic of marijuana dependence was a worthy one, Roffman set up a quick study at the University of Washington, recruiting volunteers to man a phone line and developing a questionnaire. "Then we went into the media and asked for adults who smoked marijuana and had concerns or questions about their use to call for an anonymous interview. And once those calls started to come in, they came in droves."

The results of those 225 interviews were that "many of these individuals were people who believed that they needed to cut back or quit and couldn't on their own, they tried and they weren't succeeding, and very few of them were concurrently abusing alcohol or any other drugs," said Roffman. The results were convincing enough that the National Institute on Drug Abuse gave him funding to do his first counseling study of ways to help adults dependent on marijuana, back in the mid-1980s.

Marijuana addicts also have their own 12-step program, Marijuana Anonymous, which defines a marijuana addict not in medical terms but in self-definition: "Whether or not our addiction is psychological, physical, or both, matters little," states its website. "When it comes to the use of marijuana, we have lost the power of choice. It is strictly up to the individual to decide whether he or she feels addicted to marijuana."

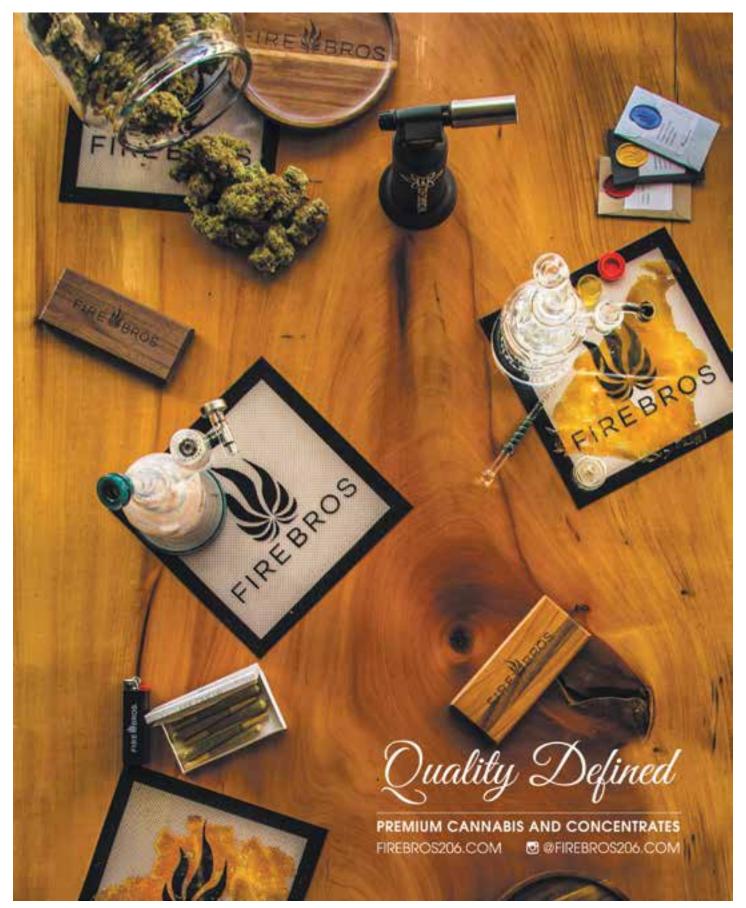
Roffman, who himself identifies as a former marijuana addict, says part of the denial of marijuana's addictiveness is the image of addiction that's been perpetuated in the media. "It does not lend itself

to the image of a junkie having a horrible, horrible experience," he said. "It is not the delirium tremens of the alcoholic. But there is a syndrome of withdrawal from marijuana. It's documented. It doesn't occur in the same level of intensity with all people who use marijuana heavily and then stop. And that makes it all the more complicated."

And there is a proven biological basis for dependence. The 2006 book *Cannabis Dependence*, which Roffman coedited, points to the fact that humans have a specific cannabinoid receptor in the brain and a "compound that activates the same receptor sites in the brain" as THC, called anandamide. "With greater understanding of the neurochemical basis of cannabis's reinforcing effects on brain systems, the reasons for the persistence of marijuana use have become more apparent," the book states.

Roffman says that acknowledging marijuana's addictiveness and its potential health effects is sometimes considered the enemy to legalization, but that such ideas do not need to be mutually exclusive. Roffman began his academic career as an activist and chair of the state chapter of NORML (National Organization for the Reform of Marijuana Laws), on the stump for decriminalization. But as his own addiction became more of a problem, he turned his eye toward dependence treatment.

While he was and continues to be a strong supporter of legalization, he believes the government needs to do a better job of educating the public about marijuana's potential health impacts. And he chafes at the knee-jerk reactions to discussions about marijuana addiction. "When you do talk about it, it's very likely that somebody is going to squash you, is going to put you down, is going to say, 'Marijuana is not addictive, you're a wuss. Marijuana is not addictive, you're just not using it right. Marijuana is not addictive, your wife is a (bad word)'... people who are absolutely certain that you can't become addicted to marijuana. I





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would agree with them if the science backed them up. But right now, all that's backing them is ideology and a lot of like-minded people on the web who are pounding their chests and saying, 'Marijuana is not addictive.' It is addictive."

In terms of his own withdrawal symptoms, Roffman says when he stopped using marijuana, he felt "pretty irritable" and "a lot of craving," which fall in line with the commonly accepted withdrawal symptoms of cannabis addiction: anxiety, irritability, restlessness, decreased appetite or weight loss, and sleep difficulties, including strange dreams. Less common symptoms include physical effects (chills, stomach pain, shakiness, and sweating) and a depressed mood.

There's also this: In the 2004 Marijuana Treatment Project Research Group, a sample of 450 chronic cannabis users seeking treatment as part of a multisite intervention trial, determined that almost all participants (96 percent) had unsuccessful attempts

to quit or cut down, 95 percent said they continued to use marijuana despite recurrent psychological or physical problems, and 83 percent reported that large amounts of their time were spent using or recovering from marijuana use.

Withdrawal symptoms occurred in 77.6 percent of the sample.

Roffman acknowledges that more studies need to be done to fully understand marijuana's impacts on health, but as long as marijuana continues to, in his words, "be held captive" in Schedule 1 of the federal Controlled Substances Act, scientists' ability to study marijuana will continue to be limited. While a major provision of Initiative 502, which legalized marijuana in Washington State, was the earmarking of revenue to fund more research, prevention, and education efforts on substance abuse, Republicans in the state legislature have threatened to redirect those funds to other services because they don't want to raise taxes.

Meanwhile, a proposal for a marijuana research license (which would allow applicants to grow marijuana for research purposes) could help pave the way for more scientific understanding of the drug. "We are only beginning to scrape the tip of the iceberg when it comes to marijuana research," Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles wrote in an e-mailed statement. "Up until recently, the federal government's war on drugs has stigmatized marijuana and all but prohibited research into the plant's effect."

While acknowledging marijuana's potential for dependence, Roffman doesn't advocate for blanket abstinence. Rather, he seeks a more measured, informed approach toward cannabis use. "I think that the evidence is pretty abundant that people who use marijuana moderately—unless they're in a certain subgroup—are likely to be fine, and maybe even more than fine in terms of its enriching of their lives," he said, add-

"We are only beginning to scrape the tip of the iceberg when it comes to marijuana research."

> ing that he'd caution against use for those who are pregnant, have cardiovascular disease, or are vulnerable to schizophrenia.

Even regular, heavy users like Jason, the Seattle guy who recently tried to stop using marijuana, agree with him. "I don't think a substance that has the potential to be so mind-altering, behavioraltering, and consciousness-altering can be taken lightly, and I feel like it really is," he said.

Ultimately, however, Jason decided the benefits of marijuana outweighed the adverse impacts of not smoking, which is why he decided to start up again. "If this keeps me afloat, I'm down for it," he said. "There are far worse things to have to do."

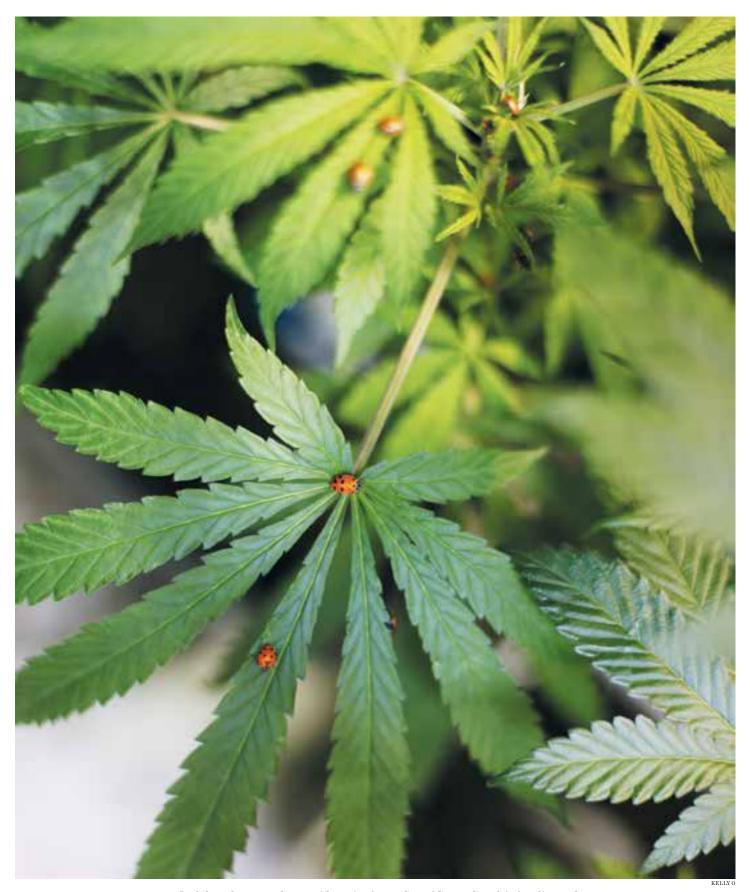


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# Do You Know What's on Your Weed?

If You Care About Ingesting Weed Free of Harmful Pesticides, You Need to Know a Crucial Difference Between Medical and Recreational Marijuana

BY TOBIAS COUGHLIN-BOGUE

efore looking into it, I naively assumed Washington State's groundbreaking marijuana legalization law had given us a unique opportunity to do things "right," which meant, to my mind, a crop that's not only legal but pesticide-free, organic, and ecofriendly. Maybe we've all already given up hope when it comes to fruit and vegetables grown by giant agribusinesses, but weed, given all the tree-hugging, organic-food-eating, GMOavoiding hippies who love it, must be different. Right?

Wrong. What I discovered was that legal weed is most certainly not pesticide-free, although to be fair, there are severe restrictions on the kinds of pesticides recreational marijuana growers are allowed to use. Pesticide use is so commonplace in agriculture that the question becomes one of degrees rather than absolutes. In a storybook version of reality, we would be smoking pesticide-free fatties with the Lorax and satisfying our munchies with unsprayed apples

100 percent of the time. But as glorious as that would be, that doesn't reflect the economic or ecological reality of agriculture.

When the Washington State Liquor Control

Board (WSLCB) was inventing rules for pesticide use on recreational marijuana plants, they turned to the Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA) for some expert advice. The WSDA studied pesticides typically allowed on hops (a close cousin of cannabis), tobacco, and food products. The rules in place are a result of that work.

The state appears to have done a good job at regulating a previously unregulated and unstudied area of agriculture—a plant the federal government still classifies as a Schedule I drug. All pesticides used on any crop in the state of Washington must be registered with the Department of Agriculture, and the list of approved pesticides is available via the

In a storybook version of reality, we would be smoking pesticidefree fatties with the Lorax.

Pesticide Information Center Online (PICOL), a database operated by Washington State University. There are, by my highly scientific estimate, a metric shit ton of allowed pesticides in our state. How many of those pesticides are

recreational pot growers allowed to use on pot that ends up in your body? Two hundred and seventy-one.

That number is not nearly as upsetting as it may sound, given a little context. At a recent meeting of state and local officials working with the recreational cannabis industry, one attendee voiced concern that 271 legally allowed pesticides seemed like a large number. In response, Erik Johanson, the WSDA's special pesticide registration program coordinator, offered this sobering bit of information: "If we were talking apples, the number would be 1,000."

When it comes to regulating recreational marijuana pesticides, the WSDA did what government agencies do best when faced with

uncertainty: They played it safe. They chose to only allow pesticides that were exempt from any tolerance level requirements—thresholds established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) that dictate the amounts at which pesticides become harmful when consumed, inhaled,

or otherwise encountered. Being exempt from those requirements is the EPA's way of saying a substance is so benign, they didn't feel it necessary to study it further. Also, thanks to the popularity of edibles, the WSDA chose to con-

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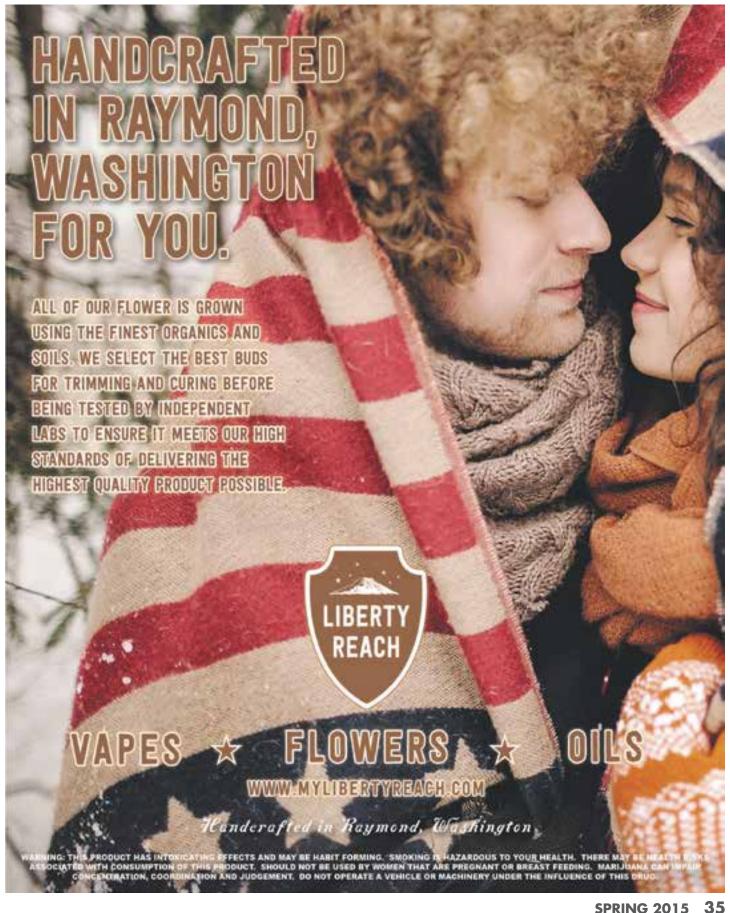
sider the harvested buds as a food product—though they are not technically classified as such by the legislature—disqualifying a bunch of nasty stuff intended for use only on ornamental plants or otherwise inedible crops. This led to that relatively small list of 271 pesticides. It is primarily composed of the type of essential oils that might lead you to overpay for a bottle of shampoo.

Many of the allowed pesticides with scary names aren't even that scary: azadirachtin is an extract of neem oil, potassium laurate is just soap, and bacillus subtilis is a bacteria with antifungal and probiotic properties that occurs naturally in our gastrointestinal tract. None of them are listed on the Pesticide Action Network's list of "bad actors." Is each and every one of the 271 legally allowed pesticides something you would feel comfortable gently misting over a field of adorable puppies? No. I found two somewhat troubling substances on the list: pyrethrins and their trusty sidekick piperonyl butoxide (PBO). Pyrethrin is listed on PAN's "bad actors" list, and while PBO is not, it is a chemical synergist for pyrethrin, working to enhance its effects. The duo is most commonly found in fogger-style bug bombs with brand names like Doktor Doom and X-clude.

Those two ominously named brands are not on the PICOL list, though they are still available for purchase at your average gardening supply store, a clear indication of their popularity. Doktor Doom and X-clude may not be on the PICOL list, but other fogger bombs with the same active ingredients are. (The PICOL list is organized by brand name, not active ingredients.) Pyrethrins are classified by the EPA as a botanical insecticide, being the active chemical ingredients of pyrethrum, an extract of chrysanthemum flowers. Pyrethrins and PBO are, given their inclusion on the PICOL list, exempt from residual tolerance requirements and thus safe for human consumption in any amount, according to the EPA.

But if you've ever used one of these foggers, you know they're some pretty heavy shit. Before you use one in your house, you have to cover all exposed food products and remove yourself and your pets from the area for at least several hours. In the context of growing marijuana, they cannot be sprayed directly onto a plant or the plant will die. Most growers agree they should not be sprayed onto plants at all. "It leaves a lot of residue on plants," said Dustin Hurst, head grower at Monkey Grass Farms in Wenatchee, explaining that it's especially risky to use these products late in the plant's flowering stage when the flowers begin to enclose into buds, potentially trapping pyrethrin residue within. Daniel Curylo, "lead instigator" at Cascade Crops in Shelton, concurs: "You don't want to be spraying all sorts of crap on your product, because the residue—I don't care what anybody says—that stays on there."

Indeed, a 2002 fact sheet from the *Journal of Pesticide Reform* cites a study in which pyrethrin residues were found in carpet dust more than two months after application, which is a bit unnerving when one considers the crys-





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tal-encrusted tendrils of a flowering pot plant. A later study, published in 2013 in the *Journal of Toxicology*, found that up to 69.5 percent of pesticide residues can end up in flowers at the point of inhalation. So, if pyrethrin/PBO foggers are being used at any point during the flowering stage of the plant's growth—which would not explicitly violate any of the WSLCB's rules—you're likely smoking some of it.

How big a problem is that, health-wise? The *Journal* of *Pesticide Reform* cites concerns about pyrethrin ranging from disruption of hormonal systems to the chemical's EPA-granted status as "likely to be a carcinogen by the oral

# Spider mites are the bane of growers, along with mold and bacteria. Getting rid of them is a constant battle.

route." The EPA's own human health risk assessment of pyrethrin suggests that long-term inhalation of pyrethrin in significant amounts can cause "respiratory tract lesions" in rodents. Scarier still, the JPR factsheet notes that pyrethrins are absorbed by humans most rapidly via the lungs.

If you're curious about what may be on the marijuana you get in a recreational store, ask. Every pot grow operates differently, but under WAC statute 314-55-087, growers are required to keep accurate records of all pesticides applied—when, how much, by whom, etc. The WSLCB's team of inspectors can check these records to ensure proper use at any time. And every grower is required to make this information available to recreational stores that carry their products.

## What Kinds of Pesticides Are Recreational Marijuana Growers Using?

o why would any pot farmer worth a damn want to use the stuff on their plants? Because weed farmers have to deal with pests like any other farmers do. "I think you could bleach everyone and everything, and [spider mites] would still get in," Hurst, the Monkey Grass Farms grower, told me.

"Everybody gets it—spider mites, stuff like powdery mildew, it's everywhere," said Curylo from Cascade Crops. Spider mites, which appear as little black dots on the bottom of a marijuana plant's fan leaves (the part of the pot plant most likely to be superimposed over Bob Marley's face on a T-shirt), are the bane of growers, along with mold and bacteria. Left unchecked, these infiltrators can ruin an entire harvest. Getting rid of them is a constant battle, and growers have typically employed a wide variety of weapons, most benign but some less so, like pyrethrin.

But pyrethrin does have legitimate uses. According to various gardening supply store managers I interviewed, if

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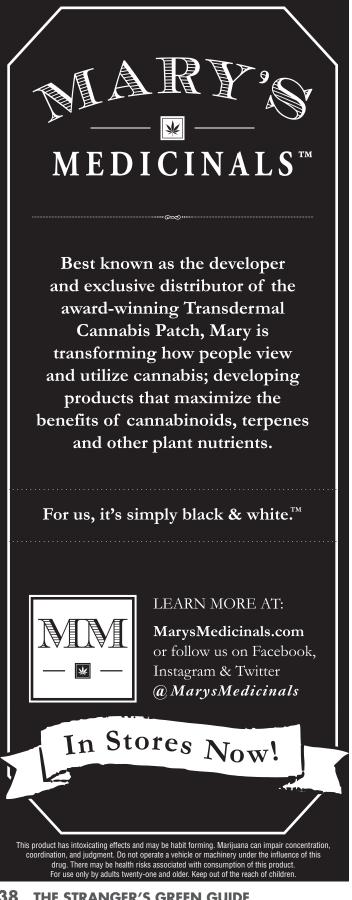


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growers are using it right, it's primarily as a "reset button" between grow cycles when all the plants have been removed from the grow room. Given the surfaces available for pyrethrin to cling to in the absence of fuzzy budding plants, it's not likely to linger. Regardless, most of the growers I spoke with—both licensed and unlicensed—indicated that they preferred to use lower-impact pest solutions anyway, for both economic and ethical reasons. Most relied heavily on AzaMax, a brand name of azadirachtin, Azadirachtin, as I mentioned previously, is just an extract of neem oil, an age-old Indian cure-all and a very hot seller during scabies outbreaks at Evergreen. Curylo said he planned to stop using even AzaMax, because he has found it cheaper and just as effective to mist using a diluted hydrogen peroxide solution.

To keep growers from using products even nastier than a fogger bomb, the WSLCB maintains the authority to pull, at random, a sample of any grower's weed to run a comprehensive pesticide residue panel on it. If any unapproved pesticides show up, growers face a \$2,500 fine and 10-day license suspension to start. The penalties for repeat offenders escalate rapidly, culminating in a permanent loss of license.

There are, of course, recreational marijuana consumers who will argue that all weed should be subject to pesticide residue testing before sale. That was certainly my first reaction when I discovered that the residue test was not part of the required panel of tests that all pot goes through on its way to market. But the system of randomized testing seems to provide a significant enough disincentive for growers to ensure compliance. Given the amount of time and money most people have invested in their operations, a 10-day suspension is a pretty serious deterrent.

I asked Phil Tobias, who runs Sea of Green Farms in Seattle, whether randomized testing motivated him to stick to the approved list, and he replied, "Yes. One hundred percent. We would get fined if we were to use something else, and we can't risk that." His primary methods of pest control? Ladybugs and ionized water. (Ladybugs think spider mites are delicious.)

Hurst, from Monkey Grass, concurred: "If there's someone there watching over your shoulder, you're gonna make sure everything is perfect."

Nick Mosely and Bobby Hines, from pot-testing lab Confidence Analytics in Redmond, were also quick to praise the PICOL list. Hines said the existence of the PICOL list "absolutely" put weed grown under I-502 a cut above everything else. "It's not just the penalty," added Mosely, "but also that there's a resource they can look to that guides them toward healthy alternatives." And indeed, a booklet distributed to regulators and enforcement personnel from various state and local agencies includes a section on encouraging integrated pest management, a holistic method of pest control that attempts to avoid the use of any pesticides at all. Mosely also suggested that many of the bad

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practices being employed were not due to maliciousness so much as an absence of education. "A lot of [underground growers] just don't know that Avid is so poisonous. They just know their buddy told them it works," said Mosely. "If they know that Avid is dangerous—it's not on the list, but here's a list of things that do work—then they'll go to that."

Mikhail Carpenter, a spokesperson for the WSLCB, says the agency's inspectors have the power to decide what constitutes improper use of a pesticide, and can immediately shut down and quarantine any grow operation that they feel to be unsafe, pending appeal. He also stressed that the WSLCB's enforcement officers, when checking grow facilities, will be examining these records closely to ensure accurate record-keeping and responsible usage. He assured me that if they were to find a grower using pyrethrin bombs dangerously close to harvest, they would put the kibosh on it. So while responsible use of foggers may not be specifically codified into the WSLCB's myriad of regulations regarding legal weed, it is subject to the (hopefully) expert oversight of the WSLCB's inspectors.

If the thought of any pesticides of any sort, no matter how benign, freaks you out, simply avoid growers who use them. There are plenty out there who don't, and there is even a third-party organization—Certified Kind—that certifies weed as organic in the absence of USDA certification.

As far as pesticide disclosure goes at our local shops, Uncle Ike's is ahead of the game, offering a small printed card listing all their suppliers and the substances applied to their products. Ganja Goddess isn't far behind. I spoke with someone there identifying himself as Al Green, who did not serenade me with his rendition of "Can't Get Next to You" but did assure me that, while they did not have a list printed up, they would be able to provide the required information to customers upon request. The gentlemen I spoke with at Cannabis City and Ocean Greens were both "not really sure," though I have no doubt they'll amend that uncertainty once their bosses remind them it's required.

The liquor control board hasn't performed any pesticide audits yet, but Steve McNalley, senior microbiologist at cannabis testing lab Analytical 360 in Sodo, confirmed that his lab was setting up to perform the audits and expects to do so in the "next couple of months." He suspected that the WSLCB likely hadn't performed any audits yet because they wanted to let growers get up and running before introducing any potential fines. Hines and Mosely told me that calibration for pesticide residual tests was also quite expensive and that screening for all the disallowed pesticides that might be out there was an arduous process, something like looking for a "needle in a haystack of needles." Arduous but worthwhile, according to the WSLCB. Carpenter indicated that the agency intended to scan for as broad a range of pesticides as possible, and will be shouldering the expense of the tests, at least initially.





## What Kinds of Pesticides Are Medical Marijuana Growers Using?

ou might be wondering: Why make all this fuss about the finer points of pesticides under I-502 if most growers play it safe? Well, because legal growers are facing extremely stiff competition from the unregulated medical and underground markets. The fact that legal recreational weed is verifiably free of mold, bacteria, and harmful pesticides is perhaps recreational stores' most serious competitive advantage over the black market and the medical marijuana market. This distinction is a pretty important one, given the stakes, and I'm a bit surprised legal growers and retailers haven't publicized it more aggressively.

A couple months back, I interviewed a few black-market marijuana growers about their take on the cannabis land-scape in the wake of legalization, and one of them, Darryl, said something that stuck with me. I asked him why, if legal weed was tested to ensure it was free of mold and harmful pesticides, he nevertheless insisted that black-market weed was better. He replied, "Well, the black-market growers are much more boutique. It's more of a craft market.

### Not knowing where your weed came from or what's on it is pretty scary when you start to delve into what's out there.

They've been doing it longer, they've got more experience, and they don't have the same restrictions the legal growers do as far as overhead and regulation."

Now, I believed Darryl when he told me he is personally dedicated to organic, additive-free growing. But something about his answer didn't sit right with me. He was essentially claiming that the black market didn't need testing or any governmental oversight whatsoever because consumers could just trust the experience of seasoned growers. That would be a great argument if the black market (and the medical market, which was not affected by the passage of I-502) were entirely composed of responsible, experienced growers. But...

I've witnessed questionable practices firsthand. I've heard countless tales of growers who are just in it for a buck, turning to harsh chemical pesticides for the quickest, easiest solution. Ian Eisenberg, the Ike of recreational marijuana store Uncle Ike's, told me of buying weed at medical shops and listening to the budtenders extol the organic, locally grown pot they were selling, only to see those same budtenders buy pot from a guy who just pulled a black duffel bag out of a car with California plates.

When I asked another black-market grower, Josh, if he'd

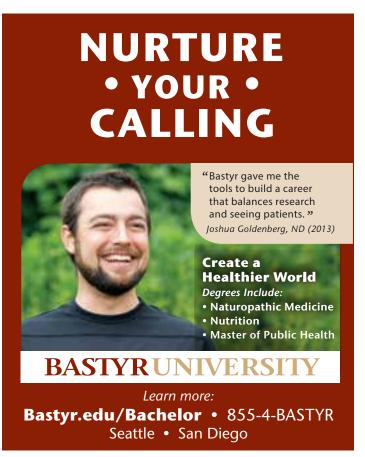
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ever seen questionable growing practices, he replied: "Definitely. People using household pesticides out of Lowe's or Home Depot. I've heard some wild stories."

And Chase, an all-natural home grower who also works at a larger medical grow, had a similar tale to tell. "It's more common than you think, unfortunately," he told me, in regards to usage of sketchy pesticides in the black and medical markets. "You can go into a [medical] shop and they're not going to tell you, 'Oh, we had to spray that one last week." He also added that in certain urgent pest situations, his boss at the medical grow had instructed them to use stronger pesticides that would definitely not pass muster under I-502, though Chase did not specify which ones.

Not knowing where your weed came from or what's on it is pretty scary when you start to delve into what's out there. The worst pesticides that I've heard of being used on weed are all still available for purchase, as many of them have legitimate uses on the type of plants you look at but don't eat or smoke. Aqua Serene, a gardening supply store in Fremont, sells both Forbid, an insecticide that was instantly described to me as "horrible," and Eagle 20, a fungicide that received a rating of "gross" from Markia Gwara, the store's manager. I wanted to know why, exactly, they would still sell these if they wouldn't use them in their own garden. She told me that there is still a market for them—albeit a shrinking one—and their store is, after all, a business. She was quick to emphasize that she does her best to steer people away from harsh pesticides in favor of natural methods, but regardless, they're for sale. Most of the people asking for them were, according to her, "not as savvy of gardeners or old-timers who have stuck to their wavs."

Would banning these products from stores help? Probably not. All of the worst culprits—Avid, Floramite, Forbid, Eagle 20, and their ilk—are available online for those who really want them.

Rick, who was working the counter at Hydro 4 Less in Tukwila when I stopped by to ask about the pesticides they stock, said that he occasionally gets customers in the store asking for the heavy hitters, which they don't carry. He noted that often the same customers come back but don't ask again, which he reads as a sure sign they're getting it elsewhere—either online or from other shops.

And, harsh chemicals aside, there is always the possibility of mold when buying from untested sources. Much of the weed not legally sanctioned by I-502 is grown in dank basements, hung up to dry in dank basements, and trimmed in dank basements. "The stuff that comes out of people's basements is often riddled with mold. Basements are moldy and it's Seattle and it's wet," McNalley, the microbiologist from Analytical 360, told me. "Basement molds are stuff that you really don't want in your lungs." He continued, "I would recommend smoking the legal stuff as opposed to anything that's unregulated. I'm for regulation. Having that limit [on microorganisms] is going to keep things safer overall. You

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206.284.5277 1300 S DEARBORN ST MON. - FRI. 10AM - 10PM SAT. 10AM - 6PM could go to a dispensary, you could buy a nug, and it could test in at only 120 colony-forming units, but that doesn't mean anything if you don't get the test done. And no one's getting the test done." This could change—in Seattle at least—under the mayor's proposed rules for medical shops, but until then it's still the Wild West.

#### If You Aren't Sure, Get It Tested

etting weed from a medical shop or "the guy" will almost undoubtedly be cheaper than going to a recreational store, because unlicensed growers operate without the burdensome expenses and taxes involved in I-502 compliance. Testing is expensive. Rachel Cooper, from Monkey Grass Farms, estimated that the tests they run on their marijuana cost around \$3,000 per month.

Of course, weed that's been tested is much safer to consume. This quote, from a paper entitled "Testing Cannabis for Contaminants" by the BOTEC Corp., a California lab testing company that advised the WSLCB on its pesticide rules, sums up the situation in the unregulated market nicely: "As a high value crop, cannabis will no doubt prompt some growers to use any and all measures to maximize yields, regardless of burdens or risks placed upon employees, customers, or their surroundings."

It is an unfortunate truth that, in the absence of regulation, some people are going to cheat in pursuit of wealth. For every 10 medical growers who are dedicated to growing beautiful, organic weed and are willing to send their product in to the lab on their own dime, there's one guy with dollar signs in his eyes spraying his plants down with Avid because it's easier and passing it off as "all-natural." Provided he's got his medical authorizations in order, there's currently no way to stop that guy from using any pesticide legally available.

Beyond the fact that it still feels weird and amazing to be able to walk into a clean, brightly lit store and purchase weed, it feels even cooler to know that the weed you get from that store is pretty much guaranteed to be free of harmful pesticides and mold. People have made much of all the things that I-502 screwed up—and that list is not a short one—but it's heartening to discover something it got right.

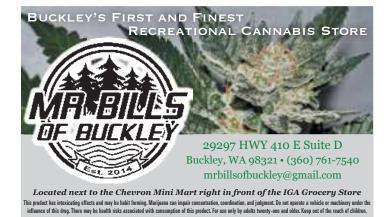
So unless your medical shop or your "dude" is willing to require suppliers to run testing through a certified lab, like Confidence or Analytical 360, and provide you with a list of pesticides used on their product, it's probably worth paying the premium at the recreational store if you're at all concerned about the purity of your pot. A sandwich board with a green cross and the word "organic" painted on it guarantees you nothing. A dude weighing out a sack on a cluttered coffee table while Phish videos play in the background is not a safe source. When it comes to weed safety, I think Uncle Ike put it best: "I don't want to take someone's word of honor, I want my shit tested." ■



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C.P.C. Center for Palliative Care 74 S Lucile St #102 Seattle WA 98134, 888-972-1555, TheCPC.ora

Canna Pi 6111 12th Ave S Seattle WA 98108, 763-1171, cannapi.org

Cesar's Salad 3908 Aurora Ave N Seattle WA 98103, 547-5754, CesarsSalad.com

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Fremont Gardens 316 N 36th St Seattle WA 98103, 632-7126, fremontgardens.org

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The Green Skunk 9414 Roosevelt Way NE Seattle WA 98115, 915-9424, seattlemarijuanadispensary.net

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Northwest Medical Cannabis Alliance 570A Industry Dr, Bldg 6 Seattle WA 98188, 400-7081, NWMCA.

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**Northwest Patient** Resource Center 1809 Minor Ave Seattle WA 98101, 623-0848, NWPRC.net

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**Washington State** Medical Marijuana Clinic 799-4427 WMMCA com

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All Time High 557-8965, weedmaps.com

ATM Delivery Service 844-420-1212, atmdelivery.net

BudJet Express WA, 425-299-0144, medicalmarijuanainwashingtonstate.com

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Cloud 9 Cares Port Angeles WA. 360-271-7286, cloud-9cares.org

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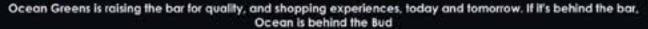
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The Happy Crop Shoppe 50 Rock Island Rd E Wenatchee WA 98802, 509-888-1597, thehappycropshoppellc.com Interactive, fun service offering premium marijuana, edibles, oil, wax, and more! We're on Leafy, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram! 40+ strains daily.

The Happy Crop Shoppe 2 5736 Vale Road Cashmere WA 98115, 509-888-2454, thehappycropshoppellc.com Whether you're going to Chelan, Leavenworth, or the Gorge, we've got you covered! Interactive fun service 40+ strains daily!

Hashtag 3540 Stone Way N Seattle WA 98103, 946-8157, seattlehashtag.com Hashtag is Seattle's neighborhood destination for quality recreational cannabis. Come visit us between Wallingford and Fremont on Stone Way. Herbal Nation 19302 Bothell-Everett Hwy Bothell WA 98012, 425-486-1111, herbalnationbothell.com

Herbs House 716 NW 65th St Seattle WA 98117, 557-7388, herbshouse.org Herb has got your herb at Ballard's first recreational marijuana store for 21+. Come visit our friendly staff.

Higher Leaf 12525 Willows Rd NE, Suite 60 Kirkland WA 98034, 425-820-5967, higherleaf.com We are Kirkland's premiere marijuana retailer, located minutes from Redmond and Woodinville, proudly featuring high quality products and customer service.

HWY 420 1110 Charleston Beach Rd W Bremerton WA 98312, 360-932-3182, hwy420. xyz Full service recreational marijuana store with a great selection of marijuana, edibles, pipes, bongs, vape pens, papers and much more!

Longview Freedom Market 971 14th Ave Longview WA 98632, 360-703-3229, freedommarket420. com Recreational store located in Longview, Washington! No lines, low prices, package deals available for even more savings! Mary Mart Recreational Marijuana Store 3005 Sixth Ave Ste B Tacoma WA 98406, 253-327-1675 Friendly service, fair prices, knowledgeable staff, quality product. Serving 21+. Check our reviews on weedmaps and leafly.

Mr. Bill's of Buckley 29297
Hwy 410-E, Suite #D Buckley
WA 98321, 360-761-7540,
mrbillsofbuckley.com Buckley's
first and finest cannabis store.
Located next to the Chevron
Mini Mart in front of the IGA
Grocery Store.

**The Novel Tree** 1817 130th Ave NE, Suite B Bellevue WA 98005novel-tree.com

Ocean Greens 9724 Aurora Ave N Seattle WA 98103, 453-4145, oceangreens420. com Offering the largest selection of high quality strains in the state with the lowest prices available. Home of the \$2000z.

Rain City Cannabis 11537 Rainier Ave S Seattle WA 98178, 457-8301, raincitycannabis.com Rain City Cannabis, Seattle's premier recreational cannabis store. Open 7 days a week to those 21+. Spark happy. Seattle Cannabis
Company 3230 First Ave S
Seattle WA 98104, 294-5839,
seattlecannabis.co Cannabis
products from over 20 of WA's
finest producers, including
premium flowers, concentrates,

edibles, topicals, and smoking

accessories

Uncle Ike's Pot Shop 2310 E Union St Seattle WA 98122, 844-420-4537, uncleikespotshop.com Uncle Ike's carries a wide variety of cannabis flowers, edibles, and concentrates at the best price in town!

West Coast Wellness 3708 Mt Baker Hwy Everson WA 98247, 425-312-7077, wcwcan-

#### **RESOURCES**

Canna-Saver canna-saver.

#### TESTING

**Analytical 360** 2735 First Ave S Seattle WA 98134, 577-6998, analytical360.com

**Certified Kind** Eugene OR 97404, 844-476-5463, certified-kind.com

Northwest Botanical Analysis Seattle WA 98103, 430-5710, nwbotanicalanalysis. com





THERE MAY BE HERCIN RISKS RSSOCIATED WITH CONSUMPTION OF THIS PRODUCT. FOR USE DREY BY ROUGH TWENTY-ONE RING DEBER, KEEP OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN."

